

Google Groups

Information

Cutrona, Danielle (Judiciary-Rep)

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Posted in group: **Groundswell**

A WaPo article from today and Ramesh Ponnuru's response below. I think this is relevant to the conversations we've been having about the establishment. I'm going to need help pushing back.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/effort-to-change-immigration-law-sparks-internal-battle-within-gop/2013/02/13/2916d164-740a-11e2-aa12-e6cf1d31106b_story.html

The Washington Post

Effort to change immigration law sparks internal battle within GOP

By [Peter Wallsten](#), Published: February 13

A new battle has flared inside the Republican Party in recent days as supporters of more-liberal immigration laws wage a behind-the-scenes campaign to discredit the influential advocacy groups that have long powered the GOP's hard-line stance on the issue.

The campaign, largely waged in closed-door meetings with lawmakers and privately circulated documents, is another sign of how seriously many establishment Republicans are pursuing an immigration overhaul in the wake of last year's elections, in which the GOP lost Hispanic voters by an overwhelming margin to President Obama.

Much of the party's sharp language on immigration during the election campaign, which Republican strategists blamed for alienating Hispanics, was drawn from the research and rhetoric of the advocacy groups.

Now, Republicans pushing the party to rethink its approach to the issue are accusing those groups — [Numbers USA](#), the [Center for Immigration Studies](#) (CIS), and the [Federation for American Immigration Reform](#) (FAIR) — of masquerading as conservative. Critics say the groups and some of their supporters are pressing an unorthodox agenda of strict population control that also has included backing for abortion, sterilization, and other policies at odds with conservative ideology.

"If these groups can be unmasked, then the bulk of the opposition to immigration reform on the conservative side will wither away," said [Alfonso Aguilar](#), executive director of the [Latino Partnership for Conservative Principles](#) and a leading organizer of the effort.

Officials from the groups say they are the victims of a smear campaign that unfairly characterizes their

mission. They acknowledge that some key figures in their past held a wide range of views on population growth and abortion, as do some current members, but the groups accuse their critics of pushing guilt-by-association arguments to distract from the merits of the case for restricting immigration.

The groups have provided the intellectual framework and grass-roots muscle for opposing legislation that would legalize millions of illegal immigrants.

Well-funded and politically savvy, the groups produce research papers, testify at congressional hearings and appear frequently in the media to push for reducing immigration. Numbers USA reports that its members have inundated the office of Sen. [Marco Rubio](#) (R-Fla.) with 100,000 faxes this year warning him that his central role in pursuing changes in immigration laws could damage his future political prospects.

The groups have established close relationships with some of Congress's most vocal critics of more liberal immigration laws.

The Center for Immigration Studies' Web site, for instance, features testimonials in which Rep. [Lamar Smith](#) (R-Tex.), lauds the center's "credible and articulate voice" and Sen. [Jeff Sessions](#) (R-Ala.) thanks it for providing "invaluable research." When Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney last year endorsed a policy of "self-deportation" in which he said cracking down on illegal immigrants would force many of them to leave on their own, his position matched a policy [laid out years earlier](#) by CIS called "attrition through enforcement."

The groups are front and center again this year, with a CIS official appearing before a key Senate committee Wednesday and the other groups mobilizing members to lobby against a possible bipartisan deal on citizenship.

Conservatives who are taking on the groups, including Rubio, anti-tax activist Grover Norquist and officials of the Catholic Church, argue that the three organizations are motivated by far different philosophies than many of their Republican allies realize. Among those views: that population growth from increased migration threatens the environment.

The Republicans orchestrating the campaign against the groups have long rejected their views on immigration, and liberal immigration advocates have long made a practice of attacking the organizations. Now, with such GOP leaders as House Speaker John A. Boehner (Ohio) saying immigration legislation is a priority, some Republicans see an opportunity to loosen what they say has been the groups' stranglehold on party orthodoxy.

Rubio's aides last week brought one of the organizers of the effort to undermine the groups, [Mario H. Lopez](#), a party strategist on Hispanic politics, to a regular meeting of GOP Senate staffers, where Lopez distributed literature about the groups' backgrounds and connections. Rubio also raised concerns about the groups' leanings during a recent conference call on immigration with conservative activists.

Rubio's spokesman, Alex Conant, said the senator "has argued that some groups that oppose legal immigration should not be considered part of the conservative coalition," adding that the "vast majority of Republicans strongly support legal immigration."

[Kevin Appleby](#), director of immigration policy for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in an e-mail to The Post that "pro-life legislators should think twice about working with these groups, as their underlying goals are inconsistent with a pro-life agenda."

The campaign has prompted at least one key conservative House member to take a new look at the three organizations. Rep. [Ted Poe](#) (R-Tex.), vice chairman of an immigration subcommittee and the [newly named chair](#) of the House GOP's Immigration Reform Caucus, said he carefully read the literature that had been left at his office by some of the activists helping with the campaign against the groups. He brought the

matter up during a meeting Wednesday with officials from the Federation for American Immigration Reform and said he is eager to hear a more public response from the groups.

“I was just surprised about the allegations of an ulterior motive,” he said in an interview.

Officials from the groups and their allies on Capitol Hill have been working to defend their credibility, saying they espouse positions held by many Americans from across the political spectrum, from liberals concerned about the carbon footprint of new migrants to conservatives focused on the rule of law and populists worried about the impact on wages.

“They say we have a secret agenda,” said Roy Beck, executive director of Numbers USA. But, Beck added, “we are a single-issue organization, and we push for reduced immigration.” Beck and other group leaders said their organizations have no official position on abortion.

“Our motives are very clear,” he said, “and some of them appeal to conservatives and some appeal to liberals.”

Mark Krikorian, executive director of CIS and a regular contributor to the conservative National Review’s Web site, called it “laughably unbelievable” that he would be accused of pursuing a radical agenda beyond his work on immigration. And Ira Mehlman, a spokesman for FAIR, said his organization “is not a population group, it’s an immigration policy group.”

The critics, however, argue that the three groups have misled conservatives. These critics point to reports on the [FAIR](#) and [Numbers USA](#) Web sites, for instance, that warn of environmental devastation from unchecked population growth, and they are circulating a [1993 report by CIS researchers](#) sympathetic to contraception and the RU-486 abortion pill.

In the [latest issue of an anti-abortion journal, The Human Life Review](#), the Hispanic GOP strategist Lopez accuses the groups of “hijacking” the immigration debate for their own purposes. He argues that population-control advocates “have built, operated, and funded much of the anti-immigration movement in the United States.”

“Those who seek to advance the pro-life cause should not allow themselves to be fooled by those whose work is ultimately diametrically opposed to the right to life,” Lopez writes.

The article, which has created a stir in conservative circles, ascribes the vision behind the groups to a controversial Michigan adherent of the “zero population growth” movement, [John Tanton](#), who co-founded FAIR in 1979 and later helped start Numbers USA and CIS.

In a 2001 letter by Tanton being circulated as part of the current campaign, he laid out his idea to “move the battle lines on the immigration question in our favor” by convincing Republican lawmakers that “massive immigration imperils their political future.” The goal, he wrote, was to “change Republicans’ perception of immigration so that when they encounter the word ‘immigrant,’ their reaction is ‘Democrat.’” Organizers of the campaign against the groups found the letter at the University of Michigan’s Bentley Historical Library, which houses Tanton’s papers.

An aide to Tanton, now 78, said Tanton was unable to speak. But the aide, K.C. McAlpin, said Tanton was an “ardent conservationist” who was being targeted in a “sort of McCarthyism game that the far left has been playing and is now being played by some people who call themselves conservatives.”

The dispute has prompted some tense encounters in recent days.

When word spread, for instance, that Rubio’s staff was bringing Lopez to the Senate aides meeting last week, other Senate offices contacted the three groups, each of which sent a representative.

“It was awkward,” said one staffer, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss a private meeting. The staffer described the critics’ tactics as “over the top,” saying the groups have been a “great resource” for data, research and expert testimony.

Another testy moment occurred recently at the weekly conservative strategy session hosted by Norquist when Lopez stood to present his arguments. [Hans von Spakovsky](#), a former Justice Department official in the George W. Bush administration who now works at the conservative Heritage Foundation, spoke up to defend the credibility of the Center for Immigration Studies.

“I haven’t heard folks take on the substantive arguments CIS is making and saying why they’re wrong,” said von Spakovsky, who declined to discuss details of what happened in the off-the-record meeting. “Instead you just get these scurrilous attacks.”

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Debating Immigration on the Right

By [Ramesh Ponnuru](#)

[February 14, 2013 3:33 P.M.](#)

The *Washington Post* [reports today](#) on an effort by some conservative proponents of comprehensive immigration reform to discredit the opponents as a bunch of pro-abortion population controllers. These attacks are unimpressive, and the people making them — including, I’m sad to say, the editors of *Human Life Review* — should be embarrassed.

Take, for example, the criticism of the Center for Immigration Studies that *HLR* published. It mentions a handful of unpersuasive CIS papers, some of them dating back 24 years, that fret about overpopulation in the U.S. These bits and pieces become “many research papers and other writings about population control” and “much of their material” — and a reason for pro-lifers not to listen to anything CIS says. Never mind that these papers don’t even mention abortion or euthanasia.

The *HLR* article concludes, “Organizations that would limit population growth through abortion, drugs, sterilization, and other methods are pursuing a radical anti-life agenda that undermines our country, freedom, prosperity, and morality” and calls for pro-lifers to denounce CIS and other groups. It presents zero evidence that CIS has promoted any of the methods mentioned.

Sometimes CIS and its executive director Mark Krikorian (a frequent contributor to NR

and NRO) persuade me on immigration-related matters and sometimes not. I'm not going to stop considering what Krikorian has to say because his group publishes a wrongheaded paper now and then.